



Town of Berwyn Heights

5700 Berwyn Road
Berwyn Heights, MD 20740
Tel. (301) 474-5000
Fax (301) 474-5002

MAYOR
Stephen D. Isler

COUNCIL MEMBERS
Jason W. Papanikolas (Mayor Pro Tem)
Amanda M. Dewey
Jeffrey Jay Osmond
Ethan D. Sweep

Town Meeting Minutes March 11, 2020 | 7:00 pm

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. Present were Mayor Stephen Isler, Mayor Pro Tempore (MPT) Jason Papanikolas, Councilmembers (CMs) Amanda Dewey, Jeffrey Jay Osmond, and Ethan Sweep. Also present were Town Manager (TM) Maria Broadbent, Clerk Kerstin Harper, and citizens.

1. Approval of the Agenda

CM Sweep moved to approve the March 11 Town meeting agenda. CM Dewey seconded. The motion passed 5 to 0.

2. Announcements

The Recreation Council cancelled its participation in the March 14 St. Patrick's Day potluck dinner due to the Coronavirus COVID-19 outbreak.

3. Approval of Minutes

MPT Papanikolas moved to approve the February 12 Town meeting minutes. CM Sweep seconded. The motion passed 5 to 0.

4. Mayor's Report

Mayor Isler reported said that the Town Council and department heads are closely following the developments related to the coronavirus pandemic. Berwyn Heights follows the advisories and directives from the State of Maryland and the Prince George's County Department of Health. The Town website and Twitter feed publish regular updates on coronavirus developments.

The PGCPs community is requested to join Superintendent Goldson for a Town Hall meeting tomorrow evening, at which she will update everyone about steps to be taken by the school system to minimize the spread of the disease. Eleanor Roosevelt High School and College Park Academy have been closed for cleaning after it was learned that a person related to the schools had been exposed to the virus.

5. Department Reports

Mayor Isler asked for a motion to receive all department reports for the record. CM Dewey so moved. CM Sweep seconded. The motion passed 5 to 0.

Administration: MPT Papanikolas reported that the Administration Department is following the news about the COVID-19 outbreak. At this point, everyone is advised to take normal precautionary measures to reduce infections: not shaking hands, washing hands regularly, and coughing into one's sleeves, among other things.

TM Broadbent reported that she was joined by CM Sweep for the presentation of the Town's \$145,000 bond bill request before the State legislature. The bond bill would help pay for replacing the roof and elevator in the Town Center and installing motion-sensing lights. TM Broadbent is also planning two orientation sessions for Town Council candidates, with dates to be determined.

Code Compliance: CM Osmond said the Code Department is now fully staffed. Compared to the same period last year, more fines were issued, and inspections completed. On the other hand, fewer building permits have been approved, which may indicate a slowing of home improvement activities. He asked whether the code management software is being used to its fullest potential.

TM Broadbent replied the integration of the software with Code work processes is more seamless now. The Code Department recently received a small cell facility permit application. Berwyn Heights may want to work with neighboring municipalities on establishing design guidelines, so that there is some uniformity in appearance. Further, two architectural firms attended the pre-bid meeting for the Police Station design and engineering project. One submitted a proposal. She will meet with them next week for an interview. CM Osmond is welcome to attend.

Parks, Recreation, Education & Civic Affairs: CM Dewey said that the Recreation Council has decided not to host the upcoming Pot-o' Gold Potluck because the event is hosted with the Seniors Club and Seniors are particularly vulnerable to the coronavirus and the event involves sharing food. The University of Maryland has extended its spring break, which starts next week, for an additional week and then plans to hold classes online until further notice. Students have been advised to leave campus for the break and plan for a potential delayed return.

CM Dewey announced the creation of a summer scholarship program, which would provide financial support of up to \$500 for any summer program that furthers students' educational or career goals. The application is due to the Town office on April 15 and should contain an explanation of the program as well as a statement of financial need.

The once-a-month Town cleanups will resume on March 21, starting with a seed swap at 9:00 a.m. at the Town Center. Students can earn community service hours but must be accompanied by an adult if under the age of 16.

Public Works: CM Sweep said, with spring coming, residents are starting to clean up their yards. Yard waste should be placed in brown paper yard waste bags or a designated container for disposal. Yard waste is picked up Mondays north of Pontiac Street and Tuesdays south of Pontiac Street. The street sweeper is in Town this week and residents are requested to park off the street where possible.

Public Safety/ Volunteer Fire Department: Matt Huddle was present to give a report. He said the BHVFD elected new officers but there are no major changes in leadership. BHVFD is optimistic about the County's new Fire Chief. BHVFD is looking for funding sources in the ongoing effort to expand and renovate the fire station. A new rescue squad as well as a new ambulance have been ordered and should be delivered at the end of this year.

BHVFD is also monitoring the COVID-19 developments and following guidelines from the Center of Disease Control (CDC) for containing the outbreak. Everyone is advised not to travel abroad or take a vacation. Run statistics for fire truck, rescue squad and ambulances were high during the last month. Career fire fighters are being placed only on high priority ambulance calls requiring advanced life support. All ambulances are equipped with AEDs to help victims of heart attacks.

Mr. Huddle continued that to date only 3 cases of coronavirus infections have been reported in Prince George's County. The County Executive's office recommends using the 311 number to report coronavirus related information. CM Dewey added the County's Health Department has established a coronavirus hotline at 301-883-6627 which people should call instead of 911.

6. Committee Reports

Education Advisory Committee: CM Dewey reported that the Education Advisory Committee will host a Civics Day on April 1. During the daytime, Councilmembers will be available in the G. Love Room to assist residents with responding to the Census, and in the evening the BHEAC will continue to help with the census, as well as voter registration while offering refreshments. Members of the Berwyn Heights Board of Elections and the Historical Committee will be present to inform about local government. There is a possibility of someone from the Prince George's County Community College coming out to hold a civics education session.

Green Team: CM Dewey said the Town cleanup on March 21 will begin with seed swap held in the Town Center at 9:00 a.m. The Green Team is pursuing a Bee City USA certification and is starting to plan for the renewal of the Sustainable Maryland certification due later this year.

Historical Committee: Clerk Harper reported that the Historical Committee is planning to hold its spring reception on May 17 and preparing to participate in the April 1 civics event.

Neighborhood Watch/Emergency Preparedness: There was no report.

Recreation Council: Angie Wolfinger gave the report. She said, after the postponement of the Pot o' Gold potluck, the next event on the calendar is the Easter Egg Hunt scheduled for April 11, 12:00 p.m. at the Community Center. Berwyn Heights Day follows on Saturday, May 2. Town organizations are encouraged to participate in the parade with decorated vehicles, floats or costumes. To sign up, residents should contact Recreation Council President Susan Jones at violindreams@verizon.net.

7. Unfinished Business

Ordinance 177-7 – 2nd Reading & Adoption of FY 2020 Budget Amendment to Purchase Mobile Speed Monitors: Clerk Harper read the Ordinance. TM Broadbent explained that the Council approved the purchase of mobile speed monitors in the FY 2019 budget following the recommendation of the Quality of Life Commission. Upon delivery, the Police found the signs unsuitable and returned them to the vendor. The money was returned to the fund balance. The Police this year purchased two different, smaller speed monitors with money to be taken from the FY 2020 fund balance. This budget amendment appropriates the funds for the purchase.

CM Osmond moved to approve the Ordinance. CM Dewey seconded. The motion passed 5 to 0.

Ordinance 177-8 – 2nd Reading & Adoption of FY 2020 Budget Amendment for Homeowners Tax Credit: Clerk Harper read the Ordinance. TM Broadbent explained this Ordinance appropriated \$700 to give a tax credit to four eligible applicants under the newly instituted Homeowners Tax Credit program. Berwyn Heights will simply issue checks to these homeowners instead of having Prince George's County issue the credit.

CM Dewey moved to approve the Ordinance. CM Osmond seconded. The motion passed 5 to 0.

8. New Business

Ordinance 177-9 – 1st Reading & Adoption of FY 2020 Budget Amendment for Town Center

Improvements (Emergency Ordinance): Clerk Harper read the Ordinance. TM Broadbent explained, as an emergency ordinance, the Council needs to amend this Ordinance to adopt it on first reading. This is another budget amendment to appropriate funds for items not anticipated when the budget was adopted. The Town Center had maintenance and repair needs that exceeded the budgeted funds and will likely require more expenditures in the next fiscal year because there is a lot of deferred maintenance.

CM Osmond suggested to have an annual inspection of the Town Center to keep an inventory of maintenance needs and track the life cycle of the various systems. TM Broadbent agreed and said she thinks an independent contractor should do the inspections rather than Public Works staff. She recently had a contractor take a closer look at the building who pointed out a number of things that need attention. CM Dewey added the Town would be able to look for alternative funding sources, such as grants and bond bills, if the maintenance needs are known and planned for in advance.

CM Sweep moved to amend the Ordinance to become effective on March 11, 2020. CM Osmond seconded. MPT Papanikolas said the emergency ordinance provides funds in time to get the Town Center in shape for Berwyn Heights Day, when the building will be used by many people. TM Broadbent noted the funds will be transferred from the Code Department salary line item, which has unused funds because of a long-standing vacancy. The motion passed 5 to 0.

MPT Papanikolas moved to approve Ordinance 177-9 as amended. CM Sweep seconded. The motion passed 5 to 0.

Resolution 2-2020 – Creating Public Works Administrative Manager Position: Clerk Harper read the Resolution. TM Broadbent said, after the retirement of Director Hall, the position was advertised for several months but no qualified candidate has been found. As an alternative, she is proposing to create a position that requires only administrative management qualifications, such as managing personnel, projects and finances, but not necessarily expertise in the public works field. This allows the position to remain within a salary range the Town can afford. The foreman would be second in command and supervise daily operations.

CM Dewey said there are likely several reasons why this position could not be filled. This solution would separate the two sides of the Public Works Director position, i.e. the manager of the department and the public works expert to get the work done by different people. CM Sweep said it is not for lack of trying to find the right candidate. There several reasons why no one has been found, one being the good economy, which has increased demand for people with this skillset. The Town is competing with many larger municipalities who can offer higher salaries.

CM Sweep moved to adopt the Resolution. MPT Papanikolas seconded. The motion passed 5 to 0.

Resolution 3-2020 – Investment Policy: Clerk Harper read the Resolution. TM Broadbent explained the Council has had several discussions about how to best invest the Town's reserve funds. Municipalities are required to have an investment policy on file with the State of Maryland. The Town's most recent policy dates from 1995. She has drafted an updated policy based on recommendations from other municipal finance directors and the Town's auditor. The most substantial change is the transfer of responsibility for the Town's investment program from the Town Council to the Town Manager, with input from a review committee set up for this purpose. The basic principles of the policy remain unchanged.

TM Broadbent then recommended tabling the Resolution because the Council has not had time to review this latest version of the policy and may want to discuss it at a worksession prior to adoption. MPT Papanikolas moved to table the Resolution to the next Town meeting. CM Dewey seconded. She said she would prefer to make an annual review by an investment review committee a requirement rather than an option. It is generally better to have more than one person make these decisions. MPT Papanikolas suggested if a review committee cannot be established, the Town Council might serve as one. The motion to table the Resolution was approved 5 to 0.

TM Broadbent and the Council briefly discussed a recent court decision restricting e-mail communication with and among elected officials as possible violations of the Open Meetings Act. Since any email chain in which more than two Councilmembers participate is considered an open meeting, discussion of the investment policy was placed on tonight's agenda.

9. Citizen Discussion

Jodie Kulpa-Eddy, Ruatan Street asked how the Town intends to notify residents of an event cancelled due to coronavirus restrictions. CM Dewey replied if the cancellation is short notice it would be advertised on social media, the Town website and signs on the door. In the future, an email list might be developed to keep residents informed of such changes.

Gerald Shields, Nevada Street, commented by telephone that he submitted a pandemic flu addendum for the Town's emergency operations plan through the NW/EP Committee. He asked if it has been received and/ or discussed. TM Broadbent replied it has been received and thanked Mr. Shields for his effort. As an operations manual, it does not need to come before the Council for discussion. She will review the document with Chief Antolik and make any appropriate changes.

Ms. Kulpa-Eddy continued commenting that the Code Compliance monthly report does not clearly differentiate between violations of different ordinances and has other inconsistencies that make it hard to analyze the data. CM Osmond suggested TM Broadbent work with the Code Director to come up with a better format. Further, Ms. Kulpa-Eddy said she remembers previous Councils discussing the Town's investment policy and offered to look for this information to share with the Council and Town Manager.

Angie Wolfinger, 58th Avenue, suggested the Town consider setting up a telephone hotline with an automated recording informing residents of schedule changes. Such a system is successfully used by the Prince George's County Boys & Girls Clubs. Ms. Wolfinger also reported an accident she had in the Town's parking lot due to misleading striping of a parking space adjacent to the raingarden. Attending a meeting at night, she fell onto the raingarden rocks and bruised her wrist and leg because she assumed another parking space was there. TM Broadbent replied that the edges of roadways are supposed to be marked with a white 'shadow line.' But in the case of the parking lot, it may be advisable to erect a railing. She will look into the different options.

Phil Ventura, 57th Avenue, expressed his disagreement with the creation of an administrative manager position in the Public Works Department. He believes the Town's standards for the Public Works Director are too rigorous and favor white-collar applicants. The Town might advertise both the management and the practical side of Public Works Director's job and then pick the candidate best qualified.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:38 p.m.

Signed: *Kerstin Harper*, Town Clerk